

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated September 11, 2003. Claims 1-2 and 4-7 remain pending in this application. Claim 1 is the independent claim. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicants note with appreciation the indication that Claims 3-7 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants have added the limitations of canceled Claim 3 to independent Claim 1 and believe Claims 1-2 and 4-7 claims to be allowable.

In response to the Office Action's objections to Claims 5 and 6, Applicants respectfully believe the amendments to Claims 5 and 6 adequately respond to the objection and render it moot. Applicants request withdrawal of the objection to Claims 5 and 6.

On the merits, the Office Action rejected Claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being unpatentable over Welch (U.S. Patent No. 6,268,777; hereinafter "Welch"). Applicants respectfully believe the amendments to Claim 1 render the rejection moot.

Claims 2 and 4-7 depend from independent Claim 1 discussed above and are believed patentable for at least the same reasons. In addition, Applicants respectfully believe Claims 2-7 to be

independently patentable and request separate consideration of each claim.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached by telephone at the number given below.

Respectfully submitted,

By 

Aaron Waxler,

Reg. 48,027

(914) 333-9608

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